

M. David Litwa, *Jesus Deus. The Early Christian Depiction of Jesus as a Mediterranean God.* Minneapolis: Fortress Press (www.fortresspress.com), 2014. Pages, xi + 281. Paper, \$39.00.

This is a very substantial and helpful study that emphasizes the influence of Greco-Roman culture and its notion of deification on early Christian depictions of Jesus' divinity. Litwa is not intending to debunk or relativize Christian convictions about Jesus' divinity or to suggest that Christian faith in the divinity of Christ was part of an evolutionary process that took place as Christianity moved further into Greco-Roman culture. Rather, he wants to explore how, along with its important Jewish matrix, early Christianity was also influenced by its surrounding Hellenistic

culture. In fact, as Litwa points out, New Testament scholarship has long recognized that the Judaism of the first century was already strongly influenced by Greco-Roman culture. Litwa selects key events of Jesus' life, from his conception to his exaltation, to illustrate how some early Christian writers from the New Testament up to the third century used the language and concepts of the Greco-Roman language of deification. Litwa's careful and respectful considerations are, in my view, misrepresented in the title of this volume; he is not claiming that early Christianity depicted Jesus as a "Mediterranean God" as if Jesus were one among many claimants to divinity, but that its unique claims for Jesus drew on the language and forms of deification found in the surrounding Mediterranean culture to express its Christology.